

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE

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FOR ASST SECY SISCO

FOL TEL SENT SECSTATE WASHDC INFO AMMAN CAIRO JERUSALEM

FROM TEL AVIV 20 APR 73 REPEATED:

QUOTE TEL AVIV 3138

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PBOR, IS, EG, JO

SUBJECT: PRIMIN MEIR'S POSITION ON POLICY TOWARD WEST BANK

REF: TEL AVIV 2969

SUMMARY. MRS MEIR, LONG SILENT ON SUBJECT, HAS NOW COME FORTH (PREDICTABLY) WITH FIRM POSITION ADVOCATING (A) NO CHANGE IN LONG-STANDING GOI REFUSAL TO TAKE PRECISE STAND ON FUTURE BOUNDARY WITH JORDAN TO BE SOUGHT SOMEDAY IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND (B) NO QUALITATIVE CHANGE IN ISRAELI ACTIVITIES IN WEST BANK DURING INTERIM BEFORE SETTLEMENT WITH JORDAN. SHE WAS FORCED TO THINK OVER THESE ISSUES, WHICH SHE WOULD PREFER NOT TO HAVE RAISED AT ALL IN ISRAELI POLITICS, BECAUSE OF DAYAN- INSPIRED FORMAL DEBATE WITHIN LABOR PARTY RE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES ENDING APRIL 12. PRIMIN HAD BEEN UNHAPPY WITH COURSE OF LABOR PARTY DEBATE ON OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, WHICH INEVITABLY TURNED QUICKLY INTO DIVISIVE DISCUSSION OF ISRAEL'S POSITION ON FUTURE BORDERS WITH JORDAN. BUT SHE COULD NOT IGNORE
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DEBATE, PARTICULARLY AS IT WAS EVOLVING INTO A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN DAYAN ON ONE HAND AND SAPIR, ALLON, AND EBAN ON OTHER. WHEN SHE BROKE HER SILENCE APRIL 12 AT CONCLUDING SESSION OF DEBATE, SHE CAME OUT SQUARELY BEHIND CONTINUATION OF THE AMBIGUOUS POLICY THAT HAS LED GOI AND LABOR PARTY FOR PAST FOUR YEARS AND IN THE PROCESS OFFERED THE LABOR PARTY A WAY OUT OF A CONFRONTATION, AT LEAST ON THIS SUBJECT. JUDGING FROM FULL TEXT OF HERE REMARKS NOW AVAILABLE TO EMBASSY, PRIMIN IN EFFECT HAS CALLED ON LABOR PARTY TO DRAW UP PLATFORM THAT DOES NOT COMMIT PARTY TO SPECIFIC POSITION ON FUTURE BORDERS, WHILE AT SAME TIME SHE WENT ALONG WITH THOSE IN PARTY WHO WANT MORE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND MORE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR TERRITORIES' ARABS. BOTH DAYAN AND SAPIR CAN LIVE WITH THIS FORMULA AND IN EMBASSY VIEW WILL IN END DO SO, EVEN IF IN INTERIM THEY CONTINUE TO ENGAGE IN FURTHER BITTER CLASHES.

1. PRIMIN MEIR HAD NOT BEEN PARTICULARLY HAPPY WITH DEBATE IN HER PARTY OVER THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES SINCE IT INVARIABLY LED PARTICIPANTS TO DISCUSS THE DIVISIVE SUBJECT OF ISRAEL' S FUTURE PEACE BORDERS. SINCE 1967 SHE HAS SHUNNED IDEA OF DRAWING MAP OF ISRAEL' S DESIRED BOUNDARIES UNDER FINAL SETTLEMENT, KNOWING THAT TO DO SO COULD LEAD TO (IN HER WORDS) A " WAR AMONG THE JEWS." AS SHE SAID APRIL 12, WHEN ARABS DO FINALLY NEGOTIATE, " THERE WILL BE A DEBATE (IN ISRAEL), AND IT WILL BE A DIFFICULT AND BITTER DEBATE , BUT THEN IT WILL BE WORTHWHILE... THEN THERE WILL BE A CHANCE FOR PEACE." NONETHELESS, MRS MEIR COULD NOT IGNORE GROWING DIVISION IN HER PARTY, PARTICULARLY BETWEEN DAYAN AND SAPIR, OVER THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, AND SHE WAS FORCED TO TAKE A STAND.

2. PRIMIN' S POSITION, AS REFLECTED IN HER SPEECH BEFORE LABOR PARTY SECRETARIAT IN CONCLUDING SESSION OF DEBATE APRIL 12, CONTAINED CLEAR DEFINITION OF SEVERAL LINES OF HER THINKING ON ISSUES. SHE IN EFFECT TOLD HER COLLEAGUES THAT SHE WAS QUITE CONTENT WITH POLICY UNDER WHICH SHE HAS GUIDED LABOR PARTY OVER PAST FOUR YEARS. BY DESIGN OR CONVICTION SHE CAME OUT SQUARELY IN THE MIDDLE OF DAYAN AND SAPIR AND OFFERED A WAY FOR BOTH HAWKS AND DOVES IN HER PARTY TO WORK IN HARNESS FOR THE COMING ELECTIONS, AT LEAST ON THE QUESTION OF THE PARTY' S POLICY TOWARD THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.

3. MRS MEIR SAID THAT TO HER, THE ONE CONSIDERATION IN MAKING DECISION ON FUTURE BORDERS IS SECURITY. SHE SAID SHE NEVER BE-
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LIEVED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE IS SOME BORDER THAT CAN BE GUARANTEED, EITHER BY SOMEONE ELSE OR BY ISRAEL'S OWN EFFORTS, WHICH WILL MEAN NO MORE WAR. BUT, SHE SAID, THERE ARE BORDERS WHICH CAN BE DEFENDED BY ISRAEL WITH THE LEAST LOSS OF ISRAEL LIFE. SPEAKING OF HISTORIC AND RELIGIOUS LONGING FOR " LAND OF ISRAEL, " PRIMIN SAID THAT JEWISH PEOPLE HAD LIVED WITH THIS LONGING FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. SIGNALLING HER OWN READINESS TO SEE SUBSTANTIAL PART OF WEST BANK RETURNED TO JORDAN, SHE SAID IT IS PREFERABLE FOR JEWISH PEOPLE TO CONTINUE TO LIVE WITH A BIT OF EMOTION AND LONGING JUST SO LONG AS THEY CAN DO SO IN A STATE OF SECURITY.

4. PRIMIN STRESSED THAT SHE IS NOT WILLING TO MAKE AS MANY CONCESSIONS TO ARABS TODAY AS SHE HAD BEEN PREPARED TO MAKE IMMEDIATELY AFTER SIX- DAY WAR. SHE SAID THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO FORGET PAST SIX YEARS AND THAT ISRAELIS HAVE HAD TO REVISE THEIR CONCLUSIONS IN LIGHT OF THAT EXPERIENCE. ISSUE, ACCORDING TO PRIMIN, IS NOT ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF TERRITORIES AND IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF BORDERS WHICH IS DELAYING FINAL MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. IF IT WERE, SHE SAID, COMPROMISE WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE. REAL ARGUMENT IN AREA RESULTS FROM FACT THAT ISRAEL WANTS TO EXIST WHILE ARABS DO NOT WANT ISRAEL TO EXIST. ON THIS ISSUE, PRIMIN SAID, THERE CAN BE NO COMPROMISE. SOME DAY, HOWEVER, THERE WILL BE REVOLUTION IN ARABS' THINKING AND THEY WILL COME TO CONCLUSION THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE AND THEY MUST LIVE WITH ISRAEL. THEN, PRIMIN SAID, BORDER ISSUE WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO STAND IN WAY OF PEACE.

5. PRIMIN LASHED OUT AGAINST SOME ISRAELI YOUTH AND A FEW INTELLECTUALS WHO CLAIM THAT IN RETURNING TO THEIR ANCIENT HOMELAND, JEWS HAD COMMITTED A CRIME AGAINST PALESTINIANS. PRIMIN SAID SHE COULD UNDERSTAND THAT ARABS WHO HAD LIVED IN ACCO, JAFFA, IKRIT AND BIRAM MISS THEIR HOMES. BUT SHE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND HOW ANYONE COULD COMPARE THIS SENTIMENT WITH CRIMES THAT HAD BEEN COMMITTED AGAINST JEWISH PEOPLE. SHE STRESSED THAT JEWS HAVE ONLY ONE SMALL CORNER OF MIDDLE EAST, WHILE ARABS HAVE EIGHTEEN COUNTRIES. PRIMIN SAID SHE DOES NOT THINK IT IS UP TO ISRAELIS TO DETERMINE IF THERE IS OR IS NOT A PALESTINIAN PEOPLE -- THAT IS UP TO PALESTINIANS. BUT PALESTINIANS ALREADY HAVE A HOME IN JORDAN. JORDAN CANNOT EXIST NOR DEVELOP WITHOUT THEM. PRIMIN ADDED THAT THERE ARE EXTENSIVE AREAS WITH POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT IN JORDAN WHERE PALESTINIANS CAN FIND REHABILITATION.

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6. MRS MEIR SAID THAT THE ONLY REASON A REFUGEE PROBLEM STILL EXISTS IS BECAUSE ARABS WANT TO USE IT AS WEAPON AGAINST ISRAEL. SHE SAID THAT IN PEACE AGREEMENT ISRAEL WOULD EXPRESS ITS WILLINGNESS TO PAY COMPENSATION FOR " DESERTED " ARAB PROPERTY WITHIN

ISRAEL' S BORDERS AND TO OFFER ASSISTANCE TO ARAB COUNTRIES IN RESETTLING REFUGEES. SHE ADDED THAT REHABILITATION OF WEST BANKERS AND GAZANS WHO ARE 1948 REFUGEES AND WHO WILL BE WITHIN ISRAEL' S BORDERS AFTER FINAL SETTLEMENT, AND THERE WILL BE SOME SUCH PEOPLE, WILL BE RESPONSIBILITY OF ISRAEL. PROBLEM OF PALESTINIANISM WILL BE RESPONSIBILITY OF JORDAN. PRIMIN CONCLUDED THAT END OF ARAB- ISRAELI CONFLICT WILL ALSO SPELL END OF ALL ARAB CLAIMS AGAINST ISRAEL.

7. ADDRESSING STATUS OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES TODAY, PRIMIN SAID THAT SHE HAS NO DOUBT THAT ISRAEL MUST DO MORE IN TERMS OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. SHE ALSO SAID ISRAEL MUST DO EVERYTHING NECESSARY FOR ARAB INHABITANTS OF TERRITORIES BOTH BECAUSE IT IS REQUIREMENT OF FAIRNESS AND BECAUSE WHEN PART OF THE INHABITANTS ARE SEPARATED FROM ISRAEL UNDER TERMS OF PEACE, SHE WANTS THEM TO FEEL THAT THEY HAD A GOOD AND IMPORTANT EXPERIENCE UNDER ISRAELI RULE. BUT PRIMIN REITERATED HER FEELING THAT IT IS A POTENTIAL DISASTER FOR ISRAEL TO HAVE 12,000 ARABS WORKING WITHIN PRE-1967 BORDERS OF ISRAEL.

8. COMMENT: ON ONE HAND, MRS MEIR DOES NOT WANT PLATFORM THAT WILL COMMIT PARTY TO SPECIFIC BORDERS OR NEGOTIATING POSITIONS. ON OTHER HAND, SHE HAS INDICATED SHE WILL GO ALONG WITH THE MANY IN HER PARTY WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE INTENSIFIED ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN PARTS OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES GENERALLY CONFORMING TO ALLON PLAN BORDERS. SHE WILL ALSO AGREE TO THE CALL FOR GREATER DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ARAB POPULATION OF TERRITORIES. IN SHORT RUN, BOTH DAYAN AND SAPIR CAN ACCEDE TO THIS FORMULA WITH LITTLE LOSS OF FACE AND WITHOUT UNDERMINING THEIR RESPECTIVE POWER IN LABOR PARTY. IN EMBASSY' S VIEW THIS IS WHAT THEY WILL ULTIMATELY DO, THOUGH THERE MAY YET BE HEATED AND BITTER CLASHES BETWEEN THEM.

9. THIS ESTIMATE, OF COURSE, DEPENDS ON PRIMIN' S DECISION TO STAY AT HELM OF LABOR PARTY FOR AT LEAST ANOTHER YEAR. SIGNALS EMANATING FROM PRIMIN' S OFFICE CONTINUE TO BE CONFUSING ON THIS QUESTION. ON ONE HAND, HER OFFICE HAS REPEATEDLY DENIED ALL RUMORS TO EFFECT THAT SHE HAS DECIDED TO STEP DOWN. ON OTHER HAND, PRIMIN HAS

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RUMORED TO HAVE CONTRACTED TO PUBLISH HER MEMOIRS NEXT SPRING, WHICH SHE COULD NOT DO AS PRIMIN. BUT CONSENSUS REMAINS THAT SHE WILL AGREE TO STAY ON.

ZURHELLEN UNQUOTE PORTER

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